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Provisional

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Friday, 28 March 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Traoré	(Guinea)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Mexico	Ms. García Guerra
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Smirnov
	Spain	Mr. Sanz
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Letter dated 31 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/287)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-29979 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 31 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/287)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Fiji, Japan, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. Savua (Fiji), Mr. Naraguchi (Japan) and Mr. MacKay (New Zealand) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Türk to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2003/345, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Türk: Pursuant to the request by the Security Council of 19 December 2002, the Secretary-General has submitted to the Council his report on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), dated 20 March 2003, in which he reviewed the activities of UNPOB since the last briefing of the Council on 21 November 2002. The report also contains information on the remaining challenges and benchmarks to be achieved by the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement and on UNPOB's exit strategy. Today I will provide an update on recent developments that will assist the Council in its discussion of the report.

Let me begin with the Plan of Action for the Completion of Weapons Collection. UNPOB has continued to focus on the implementation of this Plan of Action, which was adopted on 17 February 2003 at a joint meeting of political and former combatant leaders of Bougainville. The Action Plan is a result of serious consideration by the parties of the challenges to weapons collection in each district and of actions that need to be taken to overcome them. It is very specific in terms of its objectives, responsibilities and follow-up activities.

The implementation of the Action Plan seems to be proceeding well. Additional weapons have been retrieved and three new containments at Stage II have taken place. Within the framework of the Action Plan, direct contacts have been initiated with the persons responsible for the previous break-ins into the containers. As a result, we expect that weapons removed from one of the containers will soon be returned. All together, there are 22 containers on the island.

In several other districts, the former combatants, acting on UNPOB's behalf, have been bringing antagonistic individuals and groups into contact with one another, promoting reconciliation, settling issues and thus creating an atmosphere conducive to the containment of more weapons.

Let me say a few words about the challenges we are facing on this path. The resistance of Francis Ona and his Me'ekamui Defence Force (MDF) to joining weapons collection efforts represents a major obstacle to the successful conclusion of the peace process. The

Bougainville parties are persistent in their efforts to engage the MDF in constructive talks, both at the political and military levels. However, as the recent violent incident near Arawa has shown, without Ona's own direct involvement in these talks, it is not clear that these exchanges with the MDF have had a significant impact.

Unfortunately, Ona continues to resist appeals by the Papua New Guinea Government, the Governor of Bougainville, the faction leaders and UNPOB to enter into dialogue. As long as he maintains this posture and does not encourage his followers to hand in their weapons, a significant obstacle to the completion of weapons collection will remain throughout the island. I would like to emphasize that efforts of the Government and other actors in the field continue.

Let me say a few words about the process of the Constitution of Bougainville. We are encouraged by the work done so far by the Bougainville Constitutional Commission, which on 1 February 2003 released for island-wide consultations an official first draft of the Bougainville Constitution. A second draft will soon be prepared and reviewed by the corresponding bodies of the Papua New Guinea Government and Bougainville. Provided the Bougainville Constitutional Commission is able to complete the required internal consultations, the draft Constitution could be finalized by the end of April 2003 and submitted for adoption by a constituent assembly of Bougainville. However, the constituent assembly cannot be established until Stage II of weapons disposal has been verified as completed. Assuming that the required certification could be made by UNPOB by the time the work on the Constitution is complete, the Bougainville Constitutional Commission expects that elections could be held before the end of 2003.

In order to enhance the level of security and confidence required by the Peace Agreement and to facilitate the constitutional process, the National Government and the Bougainville parties have signed a memorandum of understanding that establishes a mechanism for consultation between them on all aspects of implementation of the autonomy arrangements. This involves the transfer of powers — including the police — functions and resources, as well as the settlement of disputes. The functioning of this mechanism and the introduction, as early as possible, of a weapons regulation and control regime will significantly contribute to the achievement of that level of security and confidence.

I wish to also address the assistance of the Peace Monitoring Group. Given the announced withdrawal of the Group from Bougainville by 30 June 2003, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the contributing countries — Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu — for their essential role in the peace process. The Bougainville parties are highly appreciative of the valuable contributions of the Peace Monitoring Group. The Group has played a crucial role in facilitating the political talks that led to the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. It continues to support the peace process in numerous ways. Its logistical and technical support for weapons disposal has contributed immensely to the progress achieved in this area, and its very presence has had and continues to have a stabilizing effect.

We hope that by the end of June 2003, when the Peace Monitoring Group is expected to leave the island, most of the weapons collection process will have been completed. However, at this point we cannot yet be certain that this will be the case. Therefore, it would be helpful if, prior to the Group's withdrawal, the parties to the Agreement reviewed the progress of weapons disposal and, if necessary — I emphasize, if necessary — considered the feasibility of establishing a stand-by arrangement that could continue to provide technical and logistical support to UNPOB to enable it to fulfil its mandate and start withdrawing by the end of 2003.

After living through a decade of suffering and destruction, the people of Bougainville are working diligently to achieve a brighter future. This yearning for peace gives us confidence that despite the serious obstacles that remain and the existence of potential spoilers, particularly Francis Ona, the Bougainville Peace Agreement can be fully implemented before the end of this year, allowing UNPOB to withdraw, as requested by the Security Council.

I can assure you that UNPOB will spare no effort to ensure that its mandate is completed on time. In the critical months ahead, the support of the international community and of the regional countries that have participated in the Peace Monitoring Group will be more critical than ever.

As the formal peace process draws to an end, it will be particularly important to demonstrate to the

people of Bougainville that peace will bring rewards in the form of concrete assistance to rebuild the island and facilitate the reintegration of former combatants into society. Progress in those areas will help to ensure that peace is being built on firm foundations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Türk for his detailed briefing.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the manner in which you have guided our work this month. I also wish to thank you for convening this open meeting to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the work being done by the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville. It is very important to know the views of the countries of the region, which have also demonstrated their commitment to, and cooperation with, the peace process. I also wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Danilo Türk for his useful briefing on the development of the process.

We welcome the progress made in stage II of the plan for the disposal of weapons, under which over 80 per cent of weapons have been destroyed. We nevertheless urge the parties involved to continue their active cooperation with a view to bringing the process to conclusion.

In that connection, we wish to express our appreciation for the work being done by the United Nations Political Office to facilitate and expedite the collection of weapons. We also welcome the convening of a round table to discuss the progress made in the peace process, which will serve to send a message to the population of Bougainville about the importance and urgency to make progress in the destruction of weapons in order to pave the way for the entry into force of constitutional amendments.

We recognize the importance of the new Constitution as the focus for the implementation of the Peace Agreement of August 2001. We therefore welcome the considerable progress that has been made, as well as the active participation of the island's population. We hope that that basic document will be completed by the scheduled date and that elections will be held this year.

We welcome the increasing cooperation between the authorities of Papua New Guinea and the leadership in Bougainville. The spirit of commitment and trust between the parties was demonstrated by the signing last February of a memorandum of understanding that established a mechanism for consultations on all aspects concerning the implementation of autonomy. We also welcome the decision of the National Government of Papua New Guinea to withdraw its Defence Force from the island.

We wish to express our appreciation for the work done by the Peace Monitoring Group, which has provided ongoing support for the peace process in Bougainville and whose withdrawal is planned for next June. In that connection, we share the concern of the Political Office about the need to assess developments in the weapons disposal process and to determine whether it may be advisable to replace it with another mechanism.

We wish to stress that, in order for peace to be sustainable over time, it is necessary to establish efficient administration and a viable economy. The relevant agencies of the United Nations must therefore closely coordinate their efforts in Bougainville with those of the international community of donors in order to restore and strengthen peace. In that regard, we should also mention that we welcome the activities that the United Nations Development Programme has begun to carry out in the area.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Noel Sinclair and his team for their valuable work on behalf of peace and stability in Bougainville. We wish them success in their tasks this year.

Mr. Tidjani (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): In deciding to extend the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville to 31 December 2003, for a final time, the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to furnish it with a report on the progress achieved with regard to the strategy pertaining to the completion of the Office's mission and its eventual withdrawal. The report just given to us by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Danilo Türk contains extremely useful and detailed information to help us to understand the activities undertaken by the Office since 21 November 2002. The delegation of Cameroon would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Representative, Ambassador Noel Sinclair, and his entire team for the quality of the information they have given us.

The report is generally clear and detailed and gives us the necessary information pertaining to the

implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the plan for the withdrawal of the United Nations Political Office. The key to that process is the collection of weapons, the reintegration of former combatants and the taking of concrete practical measures to restore peace.

The drafting of a new Constitution for Bougainville is a fundamental milestone in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Indeed, the essential prerequisite for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly for Bougainville upon the completion of the Constitution depends upon the real destruction of weapons during stage II of the peace process. In that connection, allow me to say how grateful we are for the efforts made to date to disarm former combatants. However, to be truly effective, the process should also include the full participation of all parties.

Unfortunately, beyond the commendable efforts that have been made, we must regret the lack of participation in the disarmament process by the Me'ekamui Defence Force (MDF) of Francis Ona. As the Government of Papua New Guinea and its partners in the peace process have done, my delegation appeals to Mr. Francis Ona to give peace a chance by participating in the current process. That would constitute an indispensable contribution to completing the ongoing peace process to the benefit of all. In the same vein, we invite the United Nations Political Office and other parties concerned to do everything in their power to avoid anything that could be damaging to the peace process, such as the recent death of an MDF combatant.

Just as we believe that the collection of weapons is an indispensable element in the completion of the peace process in Bougainville, the reintegration of former combatants and the taking of practical concrete measures to restore peace are also priorities in the process. We wish to welcome all the contributions that have been made to that end, in particular that made by the United Nations Development Programme's cocoa production programme, which has created a number of jobs for the inhabitants of Bougainville, in particular for former combatants.

We also cannot fail to mention the efforts made in that regard by the Peace Monitoring Group and by the donor community as a whole. In that regard, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have behaved in an exemplary manner. We are very grateful to them.

The Monitoring Group decided to end its mission on 30 June. We hope that the parties to the Agreement will take the necessary measures to ensure that the work they have accomplished continues in the future in order that the United Nations Political Office will be able to effectively discharge its mandate and withdraw on 31 December as planned.

We are convinced that to strengthen peace the very commendable commitment of donors must not end once the Political Office is withdrawn. On the contrary, it should continue, and perhaps even be enhanced. That is the price of lasting peace.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Danilo Türk for his very useful briefing.

Bulgaria welcomes the Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection, which was adopted on 17 February, as well as the progress achieved in the implementation of the weapons disposal plan, on which the holding of an election for an autonomous Bougainville government and the adoption of the new Bougainville Constitution depend.

We appreciate and support the efforts of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), deployed jointly with the Peace Monitoring Group and the two parties to the conflict, aimed at defining clear criteria for the completion of stage II of the weapons disposal plan. Bulgaria welcomes Papua New Guinea's obvious preparedness to settle the dispute through peaceful and democratic means and scrupulously to implement the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 30 August 2001.

We were gratified by the signing on 18 February of a memorandum of understanding by the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties, which establishes a mechanism for consultation between them on all aspects of the implementation of the autonomy arrangements. We also welcome the National Government's willingness to withdraw its Defence Force from the island on 26 March 2003.

We are very grateful to Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Fiji and the United Kingdom for their efforts to provide material assistance to bring about a prompt settlement of the problem. We support UNPOB's appeal to involve the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies

in the settlement of Bougainville's problems, in particular the reconstruction of infrastructures and the reintegration of former combatants through such programmes as the UNDP cocoa project.

Finally, I should like to note my Government's very positive assessment of the dedicated and intense work of the Secretary-General's Representative, Mr. Noel Sinclair, and his team in support of the consolidation of peace and stability in Bougainville.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his report and Assistant Secretary-General Türk for his briefing.

Since our consideration of this item last November, the Security Council, on the basis of progress achieved in the peace process in Bougainville, finally reached agreement on extending the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB). This demonstrates the concern of the Council members over the peace process in Bougainville and the importance which they attach to it.

At present, with the cooperation of the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, including the Government of Papua New Guinea, the peace process is, on the whole, continuing to register progress. China is gratified by this development. We hope that the parties will continue to display a positive and flexible spirit so as to facilitate the final peaceful settlement of the question of Bougainville.

For various reasons, weapons collection has not been able to proceed on schedule. The members of the Council expressed their concern over this issue at our last briefing. Weapons collection is a determining factor in the work on the Constitution and has an important bearing on the peace process. China therefore welcomes the Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection, adopted not long ago, and urges the parties to take practical action to fulfil their commitments under the Plan.

The Peace Monitoring Group has played an important role in assisting UNPOB in its work. Weapons collection has not yet been completed and the peace process is also at a critical juncture. China, like other members of the Council, is closely following the development of the situation in Bougainville and is willing to create conditions to allow UNPOB to continue to play its due role in the peace process. UNPOB has long carried out effective and fruitful work. China should like to express its appreciation to UNPOB and will always support it in its work.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): My delegation is grateful for the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in Bougainville and we also highly appreciate the very comprehensive briefing that Assistant Secretary-General Danilo Türk has given us.

Germany commends the success already achieved by Mr. Sinclair and his small team, in cooperation with the members of the Peace Monitoring Group, and expresses its full support for the accomplishment of the mission as planned by the end of this year. We still consider this timetable to be a realistic timetable.

As stated in the Secretary-General's last report, in most areas of Bougainville stage II of the weapons disposal plan has been completed to date. Two districts have already fully completed the process of disarmament. This represents an extraordinary achievement and a steady improvement of the weapons disposal process since the last Security Council meeting in November 2002. Germany appreciates this steady development.

This positive overall assessment cannot be impaired by the recent shootout, resulting in the death of one combatant of the Me'ekamui Defence Force. We consider this incident to be of rather small scale and without prejudice to the ongoing peace process in Bougainville. We concur with the Secretary-General that

> "The development of the new Bougainville Constitution is a central part of the implementation of the Peace Agreement" (*S/2003/345, para. 8*)

and that the holding of free elections should conclude the successful disarmament process. However, as the constitution and election process cannot move ahead until the completion of stage II of the weapons disposal plan has been verified, we urge all parties to contribute actively to the early completion of that stage of the plan.

We have taken note of the intentions of the Peace Monitoring Group to cease all operations on the island on 30 June 2003. However, as it can be questioned whether the weapons disposal plan will be completed by that date, we should focus our efforts on starting the

verification of stage II immediately in order to maintain the possibility of its completion prior to the Peace Monitoring Group's withdrawal. At the same time, we should initiate contingency plans because we can never be sure that we will achieve that goal on time, and we should request members of the Peace Monitoring Group, in cooperation with the Secretariat, to consider, if need should arise, alternative arrangements until the end of 2003.

Today, the peace process on Bougainville is undoubtedly stronger than it has ever been before. However, in order to solidify what has been achieved so far and to consolidate peace and stability in Bougainville, the international community must give continued support even after the expected departure of the Office at the end of 2003.

Ms. García Guerra (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Danilo Türk, for the information he has just given us.

I should also like to reiterate Mexico's gratitude to the Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Noel Sinclair of Guyana, for his work and leadership of UNPOB, as well as to his staff and to all those that have participated in the work of the Peace Monitoring Group: the Governments of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu.

The report of the Secretary-General contains information that leads us to hope that the situation in Bougainville will evolve positively, despite the complications that have arisen and that must be addressed. It is therefore encouraging that — bearing in mind the commitment to complete stage II of the weapons disposal plan by 24 December 2002, as previously planned — the Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection was adopted at the Buka meeting on 17 February. The delegation of Mexico hopes that this renewed commitment will enable the completion of the collection of the 20 per cent of arms still pending in order to fully enter stage III.

Also encouraging is the news that the Bougainville Resistance Force and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army plan to hold meetings in coming days. We are confident that very positive results will be achieved.

That type of initiative, without doubt, will compel the Me'ekamui Defence Force and, in particular, its leader Francis Ona to accept the new reality of a Bougainville that is prepared to cooperate and to work in order to leave the past behind, and of an international community that is not prepared to let the situation stagnate. The Security Council must therefore appeal to political leaders and all ex-combatants to complete the arms collection and to move on to the next stage. In that context, we are concerned at the announcement of the departure of the Peace Monitoring Group in June 2003. My delegation wishes to know the consequences that decision will have for the peace process.

The completion as soon as possible of stage II of the arms collection plan is imperative. The progress demonstrated by the preparation of a new constitution and the broad participation of citizens in the process are unequivocal signs of the will of the people of Bougainville. Mexico is therefore fully confident that, with the support of UNPOB, the aspiration of the people of Bougainville to hold elections for an autonomous government before the end of 2003 can be realized. We encourage the Constitutional Commission to continue the good work it is carrying out in order to conclude its task as soon as possible.

In this process, the collaboration of the authorities of Papua New Guinea is indispensable. We therefore commend initiatives such as the visit on 18 and 19 February of several ministers and other members of the Government of the country, and in particular the signing of the memorandum of understanding that took place on that occasion, which established a mechanism of consultations concerning all aspects of the implementation of arrangements for autonomy, including the transfer of authority, functions, resources and the settling of controversies.

The initiative, commitment and resolve of the leaders and former combatants of Bougainville in consolidating the Peace Agreement are indispensable, as are the reconciliation and reintegration of the former combatants and their preparation for reintegration into the life of their communities, which will require the reconstruction of public institutions and the preparation of successful strategies for reconciliation and reintegration.

We are reassured by the Secretary-General's statement in his report that as the end of the United

Nations political mandate in Bougainville approaches, UNPOB is trying to involve the United Nations Development Programme and other agencies of the United Nations in re-establishing community services and infrastructure. Assisting the island's development is the best way to prevent conflict from breaking out again.

In that context, I wish to reaffirm the statement of my delegation last 26 November on the importance of an appeal by the Security Council to donor countries to support the creation of the economic, social and infrastructure conditions enabling a peaceful transition towards the political future of Bougainville.

Once again, I thank Mr. Türk for the information he has given us.

Mr. Sanz (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are thankful for the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and for the work accomplished by the Representative of the Secretary-General, Noel Sinclair. Disarmament remains the key to progress in the peace process in the context of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We hope that after the recent adoption of the Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection, stage II can be completed as soon as possible.

We call on Francis Ona and his followers to cooperate actively in the elimination of arms and to participate in the process of transition towards autonomy.

Spain welcomes the progress made by the Constitutional Commission. We hope that the draft constitution can be presented for approval by the constituent assembly of Bougainville by the established deadline and that elections will be held by the end of 2003.

We also welcome the recent signing by the National Government and the parties to the Bougainville Agreement of a memorandum of understanding for the implementation of the autonomy agreements, as well as the decision by the National Government to withdraw its defence forces from the island. We are grateful for the contribution of the Peace Monitoring Group, which announced that it will cease operations on 30 June. In this context, we support the suggestion of UNPOB that the parties examine the progress made on the elimination of weapons and, if necessary, consider the possibility of replacing the Peace Monitoring Group with another mechanism in order to help UNPOB to complete its mandate and to withdraw by the end of the year.

As the peace process moves forward, we must stress the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants and the reconstruction of infrastructure and community services.

We trust that peace and stability will be consolidated in Bougainville in such a manner that the peace process will lead to the election of an autonomous Government and the United Nations Political Office will close upon the successful completion of its mission.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express our wholehearted thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and to thank Mr. Danilo Türk, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for this morning's briefing on recent developments on the ground. It gives us pleasure to welcome among us the Permanent Representative of the friendly nation of Papua New Guinea and to express to him personally and to his Government our gratitude for the important information that he provided to us on recent developments in Bougainville and on the positive cooperation of the Government of Papua New Guinea with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The delay in completing stage II of the weapons disposal was a source of concern because it prevented any progress in the establishment of an autonomous government in Bougainville and the implementation of the referendum among the population of Bougainville on their political future.

Despite reports of enhanced efforts for concluding this stage, only 80 per cent of it was completed. As well, Francis Ona and the Me'ekamui Defence Force belonging to him have not yet participated in the peace process. We hope that appeals, initiatives and communications directed at him will convince him to join the process. We also hope that those contacts will allow us to get a clear commitment that no measure or policy that could hinder the Peace Agreement will be pursued.

With respect to the constitutional process, we would like to express our optimism at the preparation

of the draft Constitution for Bougainville. We hope that the second draft will soon be discussed, with the hope that internal consultations will be carried out easily and quickly. We agree with the report that no constituent assembly can be established before verifying the completion of stage II of weapons disposal.

We believe that the report is realistic in its description of the process in Bougainville. Although the Office mandate's final objective — to verify that weapons collected in stage II are in secured containers under the supervision of the Office — is not fully realized, it has been effective. We also hope to complete the other measures, including the elections that are to be held prior to the end of the year, and establishing an autonomous Government by the end of its mandate.

We had hoped that the report would have more details about the exit strategy, the time frame for this strategy and the succeeding stages in the implementation of the mandate of the Office.

On the other hand, we wish to express our appreciation for the commitment by the new Government of Papua New Guinea to implementing the Peace Agreement, particularly the signature of a memorandum of understanding between the National Government and the parties in Bougainville, which have established a mechanism for consultation. We share the Secretary-General's view that the establishment of that mechanism is an indication of the confidence between the two parties.

We also express our appreciation for the Peace Monitoring Group's contribution to the peace process and thank the regional donors for supporting the peace process. We encourage them to provide their assistance in the future.

Finally, we wish to join the Secretary-General in expressing appreciation to Mr. Noel Sinclair and the members of his team, who are working hard to assist in achieving peace and stability in Bougainville.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): Through you, Mr. President, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the work of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and Assistant Secretary-General Danilo Türk for his informative briefing. We welcome the progress that has been made since the last discussion in the Council, and we pay a warm tribute to the work of Ambassador Noel Sinclair and his team in Bougainville. At a time of the Council's other preoccupations, it is very good to be reminded of an area where the United Nations is making a very positive contribution to the peace process.

We welcome the signature of the memorandum of understanding between the National Government and the Bougainville parties, establishing a mechanism for consultation on all aspects of the autonomy arrangements, including the transfer of powers, functions and resources and the settlement of disputes.

We welcome the commitment of Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare to the peace process and the close personal involvement of his Cabinet Ministers, led by the Minister for intergovernmental Relations, Sir Peter Barter.

We are pleased that an Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection is being taken forward, and that progress is being monitored. We hope that that progress will be speedy.

We noted what Assistant Secretary-General Türk said on sparing no effort to ensure that UNPOB's mandate is completed in time. In that context, it will be important that stage II is completed on time to ensure the entry into force of constitutional arrangements before the end of the mandate.

We support the engagement of all parties in pressing to involve Francis Ona and his Me'ekamui Defence Force in the peace process, but we do not think that that should be allowed to delay the speedy progress towards stage III of the weapons disposal programme.

We also recognize the valuable contribution made by the Peace Monitoring Group, and we would be interested to know what UNPOB has in mind as an alternative to the Group, when it withdraws at the end of June. There is obviously no provision for additional resources. In that context, we were disappointed to learn that weapons disposal was unlikely to be completed by the end of June, when the Peace Monitoring Group ceases operations.

The United Kingdom continues to be committed to giving what help it can. We have provided over £50,000 over the past two years to support weapons disposal and rehabilitation.

Finally, we would be interested to know about discussions between the United Nations Development Programme and UNPOB on post-conflict peace-building sustainability, including how to address the issue of the reintegration and rehabilitation of former combatants.

Mr. Smirnov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report, and wishes also to thank Assistant Secretary-General Mr. Danilo Türk for his useful briefing on the latest developments.

The Russian delegation welcomes the commitment in principle of the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties to the peace settlement and fully supports the parties' efforts to implement the Peace Agreement.

Having approved in December 2002 the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), the Security Council proceeded from the need to maintain the positive momentum of the peace process on the island and the earliest possible progress to the constitutional stage. In that connection, we agree with the concern expressed today about the continuing problems in weapons collection. We believe that it is important that the political and former military leaders of Bougainville who, on 17 February 2003, adopted an Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection make their best effort to ensure its completion as soon as possible. A necessary condition for this is also the adoption by the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement of urgent political measures to involve in the peace process all those who have not yet taken part.

The assistance being given to the parties in this effort by the UNPOB and the Peace Monitoring Group deserves all our support. We take a positive view of the activities of UNPOB. We also express our gratitude to the countries in the region for their help in the peace process.

We note with satisfaction the progress made in the Bougainville Constitutional Commission, and we express the hope that the process towards reaching an agreement on the draft Constitution will take place on schedule and that the final draft will incorporate the interests of all parties.

We welcome the signature by the National Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties in February 2003 of a memorandum of understanding, which established a mechanism for consultation on all aspects of the implementation of the autonomy arrangements for Bougainville. We note the decision of the National Government to withdraw its armed forces from the island.

We agree with the views expressed on the need for assistance by the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations specialized agencies in the processes of post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building in Bougainville, particularly in the implementation of programmes of reintegration and rehabilitation of ex-combatants, the restoration of infrastructure and the provision of public services. We are convinced that, through our joint efforts, we can bring long-term peace to the island.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Danilo Türk for introducing the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB). We would like to put on record our appreciation for the work of the United Nations, UNPOB and all the parties who have worked to seek, facilitate and implement a peaceful solution to the conflict in that territory. The courageous decision of the Government of Papua New Guinea to follow this path and its strong commitment to the peace process deserves our special appreciation. I would like to welcome the participation here of the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea.

We support UNPOB's mandate to complete the verification of stage II of the weapons disposal plan. This is an important prerequisite for the subsequent holding of elections for an autonomous Government in Bougainville. This would, along with the necessary constitutional changes, clear the way for the granting of autonomy and the eventual holding of a referendum in which the people of Bougainville will exercise their right to self-determination, in accordance with the provisions of the Lincoln and Arawa agreements.

Pakistan strongly supports this path, which the parties have courageously agreed to follow. However, we agree with the Secretary-General, who states, in paragraph 17 of his report (S/2003/345), that: "The peace process is ... stronger than it has ever been before, but it still needs nurturing." Those groups which continue to remain outside the peace process

must be encouraged to join it. Peace is the only solution, and this process, painstaking though it is, still remains its best guarantor.

Pakistan regards the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville as crucial for building peace as well as trust in that territory. We hope that UNPOB will be allowed sufficient time and resources to complete its complex task. We also hope that the withdrawal of the Peace Monitoring Group after 30 June 2003 will not adversely affect the work of UNPOB in the implementation of its mandate. If it does, we hope that alternative arrangements can be found to rectify the problem and facilitate UNPOB's task. We hope that the role of the United Nations in Bougainville will not end with the expiry of UNPOB's mandate and that the United Nations will continue to work there and to stay the course in facilitating the full implementation of the peace process.

Finally, I would like to observe that progress has been made possible on Bougainville by the courageous position of the Government of Papua New Guinea in the implementation of Security Council resolutions and in allowing the exercise of the right of self-determination.

I cannot but observe, and express the wish, that the outstanding role of mediation and facilitation played by the United Nations on this issue could well be performed by our Organization on other, far more dangerous and long-standing disputes, such as the one over Jammu and Kashmir, where the right of self-determination prescribed by the resolutions of the Security Council has remained outstanding for over 50 years.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank Mr. Danilo Türk for his briefing and to state that developments in Bougainville give us cause for optimism. Yesterday's enemies have decided to settle their differences through peaceful means and to prepare for their future together.

We have noted the progress that has been made in the area of weapons collection, in spite of delays in concluding stage II. We believe that the Buka Action Plan of 17 February is particularly important in this regard. It clearly identifies the obstacles to be overcome and sets out priority tasks. It will enable us to speed up the process of collecting weapons that are still in the hands of the factions. We will, of course, have to see to it that the specific containerization measures planned within the framework of stage II are carried out successfully. Indeed, the success of this stage will be a key factor in the holding of a Constituent Assembly in Bougainville.

That Assembly will be charged with adopting the future Constitution. The Constitutional Commission for Bougainville submitted last February an initial draft, and an amended version is to be issued in the days to come. This is a major political stage which perhaps will open the way for elections by the end of this year.

Despite this progress, we still have some points of concern. I am thinking in particular of the fact that Mr. Francis Ona and his Me'ekamui Defence Force are not taking part in the peace process. This refusal might well hinder the complete elimination of weapons from Bougainville, and that is why we should encourage the efforts of the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement aimed at inducing Mr. Ona to take part in that process.

I should like to conclude my statement by looking ahead. The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville will close up shop at the end of this year. We would like to thank Mr. Noel Sinclair for the work he has done. But now we have to think about the way in which other actors within the United Nations system, and also the international donor community as a whole, will take over. Bougainville will continue to require broad support in order to embark on the path of sustainable development. This will be one of the essential aspects for peace to take root.

Mr. Williamson (United States of America): I wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Türk for his useful briefing.

We welcome this first-ever written report on the progress of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB). Having a regular written report is a great help to Council members in assessing UNPOB's progress, particularly as the Office approaches the 31 December end date for its mission.

We would have liked to see laid out more clearly a timetable and benchmarks for UNPOB's exit strategy, including specific steps UNPOB plans in order to meet each benchmark on time. We hope that the report prepared for the Security Council's next discussion on this subject could be modified and more detailed in this regard.

The United States Government welcome the progress that has been made towards the achievement of stage II of weapons disposal, the containerization of weapons. The report indicates that 80 per cent of Bougainville had reached stage II by the end of February. We congratulate UNPOB for its role in this excellent achievement, and we applaud the leadership of the main Bougainville factions for their clear commitment to the peace process.

We are heartened that the security situation has greatly improved on the island. The report raises concerns about the renegade group led by Francis Ona and his decision to remain outside the peace process. However, we question how serious a problem this really represents. We understand that the main Bougainville factions do not see Ona as a grave threat. His small band seems to have been marginalized. He has remained outside the peace process for five years, and it seems unrealistic to expect this will change any time soon.

The vast majority of Bougainville's 185,000 people have shown that they are keen to move forward with steps towards autonomy now. The welcome completion of a draft Constitution by the Bougainville Constitutional Commission is clear evidence of this point. It is important that the international community not allow perfection to be the enemy of progress. One small, marginalized band should not be allowed to hold the entire peace process hostage, delaying UNPOB's certification of stage II indefinitely.

My delegation wonders at what point UNPOB will be ready to certify that a sufficient number of weapons have been containerized. As we know, until stage II is certified, a constitutional assembly cannot be established and further steps towards autonomy cannot be taken, and the longer we wait, the greater the chances for another break-in and theft of containerized weapons.

We believe our focus must be on driving this process forward, not on lowering expectations. The time to achieve this task is not unlimited. It is important for all of us to remember that the clock is ticking. The Peace Monitoring Group is leaving in June after making an outstanding contribution to the island's future. UNPOB itself will depart in December. Progress towards the autonomy of the people of Bougainville is far too important to be further delayed.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open meeting of the Security Council to examine the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) (S/2003/345), which allows members to closely follow recent developments and to be kept informed on progress in implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We thank Mr. Danilo Türk for his update on recent developments. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome the presence in the Council of the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea. That clearly attests to the positive role that that country has been playing in the process and in the success that we have achieved.

We welcome the assessment made in the Secretary-General's report of the progress made thus far in this process and of the work that has been done by the Bougainville Constitutional Commission in drafting the Constitution. We deem it very important that the people of Bougainville have been consulted with regard to the future of the territory. That is a fundamental step towards democracy. Implementation of the agreed weapons disposal plan is also an important step towards achieving stability in the region and a very crucial element in promoting the conclusion of the peace process and the holding of elections, which are planned for later this year.

My delegation would like to encourage the parties to move forward with meaningful talks for a peaceful solution and for good relations with the countries in the region. In particular, we welcome the efforts of the Government of Papua New Guinea and its commitment to implementing the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

We should like to stress the role of the United Nations Political Office in this process. It is our view that the Office should continue to play the pivotal role that it has played up to the end of the mandate that has already been defined. We recall with appreciation the valuable and sustained support provided by regional donors, which have facilitated the implementation of the Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's report. We hope that the finalizing of this process will continue as reported thus far and that the Security Council will achieve another success story.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Guinea.

I should like to express my delegation's gratitude to the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Danilo Türk, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB).

The most recent developments in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement deserves our full attention. My delegation particularly welcomes the significant progress achieved in the implementation of stage II of the Action Plan for the Completion of Weapons Collection. That progress, which is of crucial importance for the island's future, should be consolidated with a view to fostering the entry into force of the following stage. In order to do that, it is essential for the Bougainville parties still outside the peace process to come back to the negotiation table. It is also important to recall that the reintegration of ex-combatants is another priority with a view to a final settlement of the dispute. Moreover, we hope that the commendable efforts of the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement will be made tangible by the holding of elections before the end of 2003.

Furthermore, the development of a comprehensive dialogue between the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville parties is a further source of satisfaction. The most eloquent illustration of that cooperation is the signing, on 19 February, of a memorandum of understanding that envisages a mutual consultation mechanism on all aspects of the implementation of provisions related to autonomy. The National Government's decision to withdraw its defence force from the island on 26 March will also undoubtedly promote the establishment of relations of confidence and cooperation.

In that very encouraging context, my delegation is of the view that these political achievements should also be accompanied by enough economic growth to consolidate peace in an effective and lasting way and to ensure the island's stability. That is why we appeal to the donor community to further mobilize for the island's economic development.

In conclusion, I should like to express my delegation's profound gratitude to the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville and to the Peace Monitoring Group for the remarkable work that they have accomplished and for the indispensable role that they have continued to play in the implementation of the Bougainville Agreement. We are also grateful to the Government of Papua New Guinea for its commitment to the restoration of peace. We encourage all the parties to demonstrate the needed determination with a view to concluding the current stage on schedule and thereby arriving at the following stage, which is the prelude to the establishment of an autonomous Government in Bougainville.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for facilitating this open meeting on the issue of Bougainville. Through you, I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report and to thank Mr. Türk for his verbal briefing this morning.

At a time when much of the world is preoccupied with conflict and war, Papua New Guinea is pleased to participate in the debate on the achievements and role of a United Nations mission which is helping to build sustainable peace in an important part of our country, Bougainville.

The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), Papua New Guinea, which is known on the ground as the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville, is among the smallest and financially least costly United Nations missions involved in supporting and helping to build peace around the world. We pray it will also continue to be among the successes of the United Nations.

At the end of last year, the Security Council agreed to continue the mission for another 12 months, until the end of this year. My Government welcomed and continues to appreciate this decision. The same is true of the other parties to the Bougainville peace agreement, in the implementation of which UNPOB plays a very important part.

All of the parties understand that, as the President, on behalf of the Security Council, advised the Secretary-General in his letter announcing the decision to extend the mission's mandate for another

12 months, this is the final extension. All of us understand why.

We appreciate the announcement it sends regarding the international community's continuing strong support for the peace process in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. We also appreciate that it presents a powerful challenge to everyone who is concerned for the peace process to take full advantage of the remaining time that His Excellency Ambassador Noel Sinclair and his colleagues will be on the ground.

The parties must work together vigorously to insure that peace in Bougainville will be self-sustaining when it arrives, hopefully at the end of the year. This challenge is one that all of the parties involved in the peace process are determined to meet.

The parties' shared determination to continue co-operating in building peace in Bougainville includes a commitment to carry on, while encouraging Francis Ona and his closest hard-core supporters, who remain outside the peace process, to join in. Much has been referred to today about Mr. Ona, and I would only comment that every effort is being made, at every level, to ensure that Mr. Francis Ona and his Me'ekamui Defence Force are involved in the process.

A growing number of people in areas around Panguna have already responded positively to our repeated invitations to join the peace process. Others, including members of the Me'ekamui Defence Force, are also showing increasing interest in weapons disposal. Concerning those who continue to be reluctant, the least that can be said is that they have generally respected the peace process as it has moved from initial truce to permanent and irrevocable ceasefire, the conclusion of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and, now, the implementation of the Agreement.

The Bougainville peace process is a national priority for the Government of Papua New Guinea. Both peacemaking and, now, practical peace-building are pursued on a bipartisan basis.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement sets the agenda with three elements. The first element is the establishment and progressive transfer of a very wide range of powers, functions and resources to an autonomous Bougainville government, operating under its own constitution. Secondly, the guarantee of a deferred and conditional referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's political future, with the outcome subject to the final decision-making authority of the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea; and thirdly, a plan for weapons disposal in stages.

The arrangements for autonomy and the guarantee of a referendum are now part of Papua New Guinea's Constitution. They are directly linked to weapons disposal by a constitutional provision, which may be unique in the world. This provision ensures that the autonomy and referendum arrangements enter into operation when — and only when — the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville verifies, certifies and then notifies the National Government of Papua New Guinea that stage II of the agreed weapons disposal plan has been achieved. The process moves ahead automatically once the United Nations observer mission reports that the guns are held in secure, double-locked containers under its supervision.

As members of the Security Council will appreciate, the link between weapons disposal and the other arrangements is an expression of trust in the integrity of His Excellency Ambassador Noel Sinclair and the United Nations. It also imposes a considerable burden of responsibility on the United Nations observer mission of Bougainville.

The Bougainville peace process owes much to the initiative and the continuing active support of people in Bougainville — leaders, communities and especially women, who have played a major role, as well as ex-combatants who have chosen the path of peace.

Weapons disposal is no exception. The initiative and prospects for implementation of the agreed weapons disposal plan depend on leaders, community pressure and, above all, the commitment and cooperation of ex-combatants possessing guns.

With the active cooperation of ex-combatants, the break-ins and removal of weapons from containers that caused so much concern late last year appear to have ended. The National Government is cooperating with the police in providing financial and other support for their efforts to provide security.

Many, though regrettably, not all, of the guns taken out late last year have since been returned or recovered. New containments are taking place. While the process is slow, it is nonetheless real. The United Nations observer mission and the neutral regional

Peace Monitoring Group have been working hard to keep it moving ahead, as have leaders of the main ex-combatant factions, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the Bougainville Resistance Forces.

With United Nations active encouragement and support, what might be described as a bottom-up action plan for weapons disposal has been developed, based on careful assessment of conditions in different parts of Bougainville. The factions are working closely together to promote public awareness and, above all, implementation.

Proceeding from the Bougainville Peace Agreement, a Constitutional Commission has been established and has held wide public consultations. It has prepared a second draft of the proposed Constitution, which was expected to be presented to the National Government for consideration this week.

The Government has also appointed a high-level bipartisan National Committee to advise on its response to the Bougainville Constitutional Commission's proposals. The Committee includes five senior ministers, as well as two opposition members of Parliament, and is expected to travel to Bougainville next week.

The Defence Force is expected to be able to complete its withdrawal under the agreed weapons disposal plan at much the same time. From then on, the Defence Force's presence and responsibilities in Bougainville will be as specified by the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

Another initiative, taken well before any legal requirement, led to the establishment last week of a joint supervisory body through which the National Government and Bougainville leaders have already begun to cooperate in managing the implementation of the agreed autonomy arrangements.

The signing of the memorandum establishing the Interim Joint Supervisory Body, and its first meeting, coincided with an historic visit to Bougainville by a team of 11 ministers and senior officials, whose commitment to practical peace-building was evident in their enthusiasm to visit and meet with Bougainville leaders and to see the situation on the ground for themselves.

Even before the ministerial team's historic visit to Bougainville, the Government had announced it would provide k5 million (about $1.5 million) both this year and next, as an establishment grant to assist the autonomous Bougainville government in meeting the extraordinary expenses it will incur at the start of its work.

Reform of the public sector in Bougainville is proceeding in readiness for the establishment of the autonomous government. Thus does practical peace-building progress. It is a process in which Papua New Guinea's friends in the international community assist in various vital ways. These friends include such prominent foreign aid donors as Australia, the European Union, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United Nations Development Programme and other specialized agencies, as well as members of non-governmental organizations, including churches.

Friends who continue to make a noteworthy contribution in another very important way include the countries which contribute to the Peace Monitoring Group, namely Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, and Vanuatu. Their contribution has not only helped to build mutual confidence and security on the ground, it has also provided invaluable support to other aspects of the peace process, including communications and assistance in transporting people to meetings.

The Peace Monitoring Group has played an important role in weapons disposal. It has facilitated many aspects of United Nations work, including technical support for weapons disposal, the provision and placement of trunks and containers, as well as transport and communications.

Like the Security Council's decision on the final extension of the mandate for the mission in Bougainville, the Peace Monitoring Group countries' decision to withdraw at the end of June is a challenge. The parties involved in the Bougainville peace process have always known that the Group will not be with us forever.

As with the deadline set for the United Nations mission, the particular challenge posed by the plan for the Group to withdraw at the end of June is to make the utmost use of its presence while it is still on the ground. Everyone involved has to make every effort to conclude weapons disposal before the Group leaves.

For the United Nations observer mission the withdrawal of the Peace Monitoring Group will leave a noticeable void, especially as far as communications,

transport and technical support for weapons disposal are concerned.

Papua New Guinea notes and supports the emphasis placed in the Secretary-General's report on the need to ensure that, by the time the Peace Monitoring Group withdraws, weapons disposal will be so far advanced that it will no longer need that level of support from the Monitoring Group. In doing so, Papua New Guinea agrees that it would indeed be helpful for the parties to review the progress in weapons disposal before then. Indeed, the Government would like to discuss and finalize the procedures for verification through community-based consultation with the United Nations observer mission and other parties at the earliest practicable opportunity.

The Government also believes that the meeting at stage III to decide on the final fate of weapons should be brought forward. The meeting should not be left until the outer limits of the time allowed in the agreed plan are reached.

Finally, Papua New Guinea notes, and draws the Council's attention to, the observation contained in paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's report regarding the absence of any provision for the additional resources the United Nations mission will surely need when the Peace Monitoring Group withdraws. The issue deserves our close attention, as do other efforts to nurture the peace process through carefully focused restoration and development programmes, as the Secretary-General noted in his report.

The reintegration of ex-combatants and communities must continue to be a special priority. In that and other respects, the United Nations Development Programme's cocoa and coconut rehabilitation and dryer restoration project makes a very positive contribution to economic and social recovery, which Papua New Guinea hopes will continue.

In conclusion, let me reiterate how much my Government, and indeed all of the parties involved in the peace process, appreciate the Security Council's decision to extend the mandate for the mission in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, until the end of this year. Papua New Guinea would also like to commend the Secretary-General's report for its careful consideration of this issue. That should now be directed towards the development and implementation of practical strategies that will help support efforts to secure sustainable peace on the ground.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): Let be begin by conveying my thanks to the Council for allowing this to be an open meeting. The Council is obviously preoccupied with momentous global issues at present, but the peace process on the Papua New Guinea island of Bougainville has been of great concern to my Government and to other Governments of the region. It is therefore very appropriate that we are able to participate in the Council's consideration of this issue.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (S/2003/345). I would also like to thank Mr. Türk for the presentation he made this morning to update us on the situation. Since its inception, in 1998, the Office has provided a welcome complement to the efforts of Bougainvilleans, the Government of Papua New Guinea and the contributors to the Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group — Australia, Fiji, Vanuatu and New Zealand — to bring about lasting peace in Bougainville.

The Bougainville peace process is entering its final stages. After nearly 10 years of civil war and five years of negotiations, the process continues to move forwards on a number of fronts. Factions on the island are close to completing weapons collection and containment. It is time now for the people of Bougainville to turn their attention to the formulation of a Constitution and the election of an autonomous Bougainville Government. The Bougainville Constitutional Commission has undertaken some useful preliminary work in that regard.

Before Bougainville can progress to the next phase of the peace process, however, there is a need for the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville to verify that former combatants have substantially complied with the requirement to surrender their weapons. There is clearly currently some concern on the part of the Office that not all weapons will be contained. The United Nations Representative is therefore reluctant to certify substantial compliance.

The Political Office is also concerned that the leader of the Me'ekamui Defence Force faction, Francis Ona, remains outside the peace process and has the potential to disrupt its progress, especially once the Peace Monitoring Group has departed after 30 June.

New Zealand understands the concern expressed by the United Nations Political Office on those two counts. Nevertheless, in our view, it is unrealistic to expect that every weapon in Bougainville will be removed from the community. Furthermore, since Francis Ona has not been a party to the peace process he should not be allowed effectively to veto the whole process and frustrate the aspirations of the vast majority of Bougainvilleans when the process is so close to completion. New Zealand certainly welcomes efforts to engage with Francis Ona; but if he will not participate constructively, the process must move on without him.

The countries contributing to the Peace Monitoring Group have announced that the Group will depart Bougainville after 30 June. The Group, as has been acknowledged by a number of speakers in the Council and by the Assistant Secretary-General, has played a vital role in the peace process. Not only has it provided logistical support to the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville through the provision of helicopter and ground transport, it has also patrolled the length and breadth of the island, providing the people with information on developments in the peace process, encouraging cooperation between all the parties and supporting the efforts of former combatants to collect and contain weapons. But the Peace Monitoring Group cannot remain in Bougainville forever, and it is important that Bougainvilleans take up the full responsibility for all aspects of the peace process.

Former combatants have recently agreed among themselves on a plan to complete the weapons collection and containment process. They must now make every effort to contain outstanding weapons — particularly the high-powered weapons still in the hands of former combatants — within weeks rather than months, so that the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville can certify substantial compliance to the satisfaction of the Papua New Guinea Government and the international community.

The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville has indicated that it intends to certify substantial compliance on the basis of affirmation from the village and district communities in Bougainville — chiefs, women and church leaders — that they are satisfied that the weapons that were in their areas have been contained and that the communities feel safe. The New Zealand Government would accept that criterion for verification, as well as a judgment on verification by the Political Office on that basis.

It is therefore important that the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville formally declare that criterion without further delay and that it move quickly to certify that former combatants are in substantial compliance with regard to stage II of weapons disposal, as set out in the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

The New Zealand Government supports the proposal by the former combatants that they make one final effort to collect outstanding weapons. This support is reflected in our financial support for UNPOB's final activity plan — our third and final contribution to the weapons disposal trust fund. New Zealand would hope that a declaration of substantial compliance and an announcement that stage II of weapons disposal has been completed would follow quickly once this final effort at weapons collection has been successfully concluded.

Once UNPOB has certified that stage II of weapons disposal is complete, it is vital that stage III, a decision on the final fate of the weapons, be made without further delay. There is currently a range of views on what the final fate of the weapons should be. New Zealand's strong view is that all weapons should be destroyed in order that the people of Bougainville can be assured that their safety and security are not going to be compromised by the return of weapons into the hands of those with criminal intent.

Lasting peace in Bougainville is tantalizingly close. New Zealand urges all parties to the peace process to work determinedly for an early conclusion to both stage II and stage III of weapons disposal. The longer weapons disposal is allowed to drag on, the longer it will be before Bougainvilleans attain the control that they so deeply desire over their own affairs. It is time for the parties to move on and to focus their attention on more positive issues, in particular the finalization of the Bougainville Constitution and preparations for the election of an autonomous Bougainville Government. Only once weapons disposal is behind them can the people of

Bougainville also turn their attention to social and economic development and concerted efforts to improve the living conditions of the community.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): Thank you very much, Sir, for convening today's meeting in an open format. I would also like to express my appreciation to Mr. Danilo Türk for the information he has just provided, based on the report in front of us.

Since the Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in August 2001, the United Nations and its Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) have been playing a very important role in the peace process, particularly by promoting the collection of weapons. The Government of Japan commends UNPOB for its valuable contributions to this effort.

Japan is especially pleased to note from the report that

> "at the end of February 2003, 80.2 per cent of Bougainville had reached stage II, and two districts had fully completed the process of disarmament". (*S/2003/345, para. 3*)

This is indeed a clear demonstration of the commitment of the parties concerned, as well as the efforts of UNPOB to achieve disarmament. We hope that the process will proceed quickly so that stage II will be completed in all parts of Bougainville well before the expiration of UNPOB's mandate at the end of this year.

The peace and stability of the Pacific region, including Bougainville, are of profound interest to Japan. In an effort to promote peace-building in Bougainville, Japan has provided several four-wheel-drive vehicles for the promotion of peace activities to improve access to rural areas for those engaged in the weapons disposal project. Japan also financed a United Nations fact-finding mission that was dispatched last year in connection with this project. Also, we convened the Pacific Island Countries Regional Seminar on Small Arms last January to share expertise in this subject among countries in the region.

Japan is also making efforts to contribute to long-term social stability. It has extended assistance to expand the College of Distance Education in Bougainville in order to provide access to education to as many Bougainvillean youth as possible. The issue of regional security will be discussed in the Third Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Summit Meeting, which Japan will host in Okinawa this May.

What is important now is that stage II efforts of the weapons disposal plans be accelerated and that there be a prompt transition to the political process, as was mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. We must make every effort towards that end, while keeping in mind that all operations of the Peace Monitoring Group will cease on 30 June and that the mandate of UNPOB will conclude at the end of this year. Japan, for its part, reiterates its readiness to contribute to the process as much as possible.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Australia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to address an open meeting of the Security Council. I have been here so often during your presidency that I am starting to feel quite at home.

I also thank my friend Danilo Türk for introducing the Secretary-General's excellent report today. We listened to him with great interest.

As members of the Council know, Australia has been a strong and consistent supporter of the peace process in the last five years through its leadership of the four-country regional Peace Monitoring Group. As they also know, the Group has supported the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) in its activities, particularly in implementing the agreed weapons disposal plan. Most recently, Australia agreed to fund the withdrawal of the final Papua New Guinea Defence Force elements from the province, which, of course, is a key provision of the Peace Agreement.

Since the Bougainville Peace Agreement was signed in August 2001, much progress has been made towards weapons disposal and autonomy, and agreement has been reached on the provisions of amnesty and pardon. We particularly welcome the unanimous Papua New Guinea parliamentary vote for the provisions of the Agreement this time last year and recent moves by all parties to engage with those who remain outside the peace process.

In recent weeks, the constitutional drafting and weapons disposal processes have drawn closer to their conclusion. The parties have agreed to establish an Interim Joint Supervisory Body to smooth the transition to autonomy. It is essential that all parties push towards the finish line. The significant challenges to the peace process of late last year have, to a large extent, been overcome and the process must not be allowed to falter at this late stage.

The recent unfortunate shooting incident near Morgans Junction, which resulted in one person being killed, reminds us of the tensions that remain. At this stage, though, there is no indication that this incident reflects any efforts to undermine the peace process, nor have there been any reported retaliatory acts, which demonstrates the commitment of Bougainvilleans to the peace process. Though regrettable, such incidents must not be allowed to derail the process or to distract parties from the urgency of achieving key peace process targets.

Weapons disposal remains the key issue. Australia welcomes the update provided by Assistant Secretary-General Danilo Türk. We also welcome Mr. Sinclair's recent trial of stage II verification in Siwai district. In Australia's view, time is fast running out; stage II verification needs to be completed promptly. Every effort should also be made to ensure that a decision on the final fate of the weapons — stage III of the agreed weapons disposal plan — is reached as soon as possible and there is a credible process in place to ensure weapons are permanently removed from circulation. In order to make best use of the current logistical and organizational assets and expertise of the Peace Monitoring Group, it is essential that these decisions be made before 30 June, when Australia's participation in the Peace Monitoring Group will cease.

It is clear that the majority of people on Bougainville want to have their effective containment of weapons formally recognized and to move forward. This must also be the international community's objective. Firm timelines and benchmarks should be set. All parties must redouble their efforts to conclude both stage II and stage III of the weapons disposal process. Without the verification of stage II, the draft Constitution, and with it Bougainvillean autonomy, cannot come into being. Bougainvillean autonomy would therefore be held up by a minority of interests if verification lags. The peace agreement requires that UNPOB verify that weapons registered as being collected are in secure, double-locked containers. We would urge Mr. Sinclair not to allow the issues of the long-term security of weapons, and of Bougainville more generally, to become distractions from the parties' achieving the more limited goals of the stage II verification process. As noted in the agreement itself, assessment on these matters would be more appropriate in the context of preparations for autonomous elections.

Australia will, of course, I need hardly say, remain engaged in Bougainville beyond the Peace Monitoring Group. Our focus will then be on supporting economic development, service delivery and the establishment and functioning of the administration and autonomous government in Bougainville. It will be far more effective if our investment in economic and social development takes place in a weapons-free, secure and autonomous Bougainville, which only an effective and timely weapons disposal program can achieve.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Fiji, on whom I call.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): It is my honour to address the Security Council on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum group of countries that are Members of the United Nations, namely Australia, Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Island, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Fiji.

At a time when the international agenda is very crowded with urgent and important issues, we are gratified to see that the concerns of our region are not being neglected. Although Bougainville may seem remote to some, this does not diminish the importance of the effort to build sustainable peace there after a prolonged and costly conflict.

The good news is that much has been achieved. We are now at the closing stage of the peace process. This is also, however, a potentially dangerous stage. Care must be taken to ensure that the momentum built up over the past years is not dissipated, that the hopes of the people of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville for peace are not disappointed, and that development and re-establishment of a normal life for Bougainville are not delayed.

We have looked closely at the Secretary-General's report and note many positive elements and also an exposition of possible obstacles. This exposition of possible obstacles needs to be matched with a rigorous exposition of solutions. More important, the real significance of the perceived obstacles also needs to be weighed carefully and in the light of the assessment the parties themselves.

Time is of the essence. This is the year that we all want to close, once and for all, the dark chapter of the conflict in Bougainville. The parties to the peace agreement want to press on. The Government of Papua New Guinea wants to press on. The contributors to the Peace Monitoring Group — Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu, and in the early stages, Tonga — want to press on to the goal of peace. This Peace Monitoring Group is an example of regional efforts in resolving conflicts, peace-building and peace maintenance within their region in partnership with the United Nations, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan and the United States.

What we look for from the Secretariat is also what the Security Council asked for in December: a clear and practical programme to enable us to finish stages II and III weapons disposal and to move on to reap the full benefits of peace. In extending the mandate to December 2003, the development and re-establishment of a normal life for Bougainville are now delayed.

With the benefit of such a programme we can be confident that the peace process can conclude successfully this year, not least because the parties are determined and committed. The Peace Monitoring Group, having been in Bougainville for five years, will remain for three more months. The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville needs to use this time wisely and with a due sense of urgency, so that it finishes all the mandated tasks for which it needs the Peace Monitoring Group's support. The countries of the region remain committed to doing all we can to assist.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Türk to respond to comments and questions raised by members of the Council.

Mr. Türk: I would like to start by expressing our appreciation to members of the Security Council for this very constructive and rich discussion, which clearly expresses support for the efforts of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and the Secretary-General. We are particularly pleased by the views expressed by the Ambassador of Papua New Guinea, who gave us a very detailed presentation of his Government's efforts, which are essential for the success of this final phase of our joint effort. We are equally pleased to hear renewed expressions of commitment of the Government's of New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Fiji and others in the region to support the process in its final stage.

We shall convey all these expressions of support and specific ideas for further work to Mr. Sinclair and UNPOB. This is certainly something that belongs to the most important aspects of his current work, which requires the support of the international community. That support was expressed in a unified and strong way today, and we are very grateful for that.

This is the final phase of the process that was started with the Lincoln Agreement and given a firm framework in the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001. The discussion today has clearly shown the centrality of the task of weapons disposal at the present stage. I should like to say that the weapons disposal has two aspects. One is technical — the disposal and containment of weapons themselves — and the other is political — the need for extensive consultations, establishing a sense of security, promoting reconciliation and creating an atmosphere conducive to further weapons disposal. We thus have mutually re-enforcing activities that are now being intensified.

These two aspects are also relevant to the process of verification of weapons disposal, which consists of declarations — and those declarations of the completed stage II of weapons disposal have started to be made — and consultations with community leaders, which are equally important.

We believe that the approach which is currently in place, namely the approach which is based on the district-by-district process — the bottom-up approach that the Ambassador of Papua New Guinea mentioned — something that promises further success, and we hope that that success will be achieved.

I have noted the remarks made by participants in this discussion regarding the role of Mr. Francis Ona and his group, as well as the view very broadly shared in the Security Council that this group should not be allowed to derail the process of normalization, and especially the constitutional process. We shall convey

that broadly expressed view to Mr. Sinclair and invite him to take it into account in his further consultations with the parties in Bougainville.

Questions were asked regarding the thinking for the period after the withdrawal of the Peace Monitoring Group. I am very pleased to hear from the representatives of the Governments constituting the Peace Monitoring Group about their own ideas in that regard and the fact that they remain committed and will find new forms of support which will be adjusted to the expected needs of the time in assisting the process to move forward. There are various specific ideas that are being discussed and which will be developed further as the time of withdrawal approaches, including the possibility of establishing a trust fund to finance the extra activities and expertise that will be required, and which will go beyond what the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) can provide. Such specific ideas, of course, will have to be further discussed. We shall report on them to the Security Council in due course.

Finally, we are very pleased to hear renewed commitments regarding the future sustainable development of Bougainville, which is becoming a more and more important aspect as the process of disarmament and demobilization and reintegration continues. You yourself, Mr. President, have spoken of the need to pay particular attention to the question of further support by the donors and to development aspects. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is already fully engaged. The mission that recently visited the island has come with additional ideas, which will be discussed, and the office of the UNDP in the island is in daily contact with UNPOB regarding various activities for post-conflict stabilization.

We have also noted the wish of Council members to present in due course specific, further information about the process of disarmament and other related aspects. We shall certainly brief the Council in due course about specific timetables, benchmarks and levels of achievement. We hope that the process which is now under way will be completed successfully.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Türk for his clarifications and answers.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.